

MEDIA RELEASE

**Attention: News Director
For Immediate Release
March 23, 2007**



**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
DAVID L. HUBER
UNITED STATES ATTORNEY
Western District of Kentucky**

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GINSENG DEALER SENTENCED

David L. Huber, United States Attorney for the Western District of Kentucky, announced today that on March 22, **ERNIE WALLACE**, of 9009 U.S. 231, Utica, Kentucky was sentenced in United States District Court, Owensboro, Kentucky, for making and submitting a false record with regard to a protected plant, that is wild ginseng, which was intended to be transported in Interstate Commerce, in violation of Title 16, United States Code, Section 3372(d) and 3373(d), the Lacey Act.

United States Magistrate Judge E. Robert Goebel sentenced Wallace to pay a \$3,000 fine and court costs of \$25.00.

The Misdemeanor Information which Wallace pleaded guilty to charged that on or about August 10, 2006, **Wallace** knowingly made and submitted American Ginseng Export Certificates certifying that wild ginseng was purchased for export in interstate or foreign commerce, during the wild ginseng purchase season (September 1 of each year through March 31 of the following year) when he knew that the wild ginseng was purchased out of season.

The Lacey Act makes it a Federal violation to import, export, transport, sell, receive, acquire, or purchase in interstate or foreign commerce any fish, wildlife or plants, take, possessed, transported, or sold in violation of any law or regulation of any state.

The wild ginseng trade in Kentucky is an 8 million dollar industry. Kentucky is the largest supplier of wild ginseng in the United States, averaging approximately 16% of the national harvest annually. The average wholesale value of wild ginseng to a root digger is approximately \$300 per pound.

The prosecution of **Wallace** and others marks the culmination of a 21 month investigation by the United States Fish & Wildlife Service, Office of Law Enforcement, with the cooperation of the Kentucky Department of Agriculture, into the illegal trade in wild Kentucky ginseng, specifically with interstate commerce in unlawfully purchased wild ginseng by ginseng dealers in violation of the Lacey Act. Charges against other individuals are anticipated.

The case was being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Randy Ream, and it was investigated by the United States Fish & Wildlife Service.

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